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(54) Gaming apparatus

(57) Present day gaming machines provide a predetermined static prize award system for a winning line of symbols.

This video gaming machine provides a variable prize award system allowing the machine user to maximise his financial gain by control of the symbols and prize amounts awarded.

This control is achieved by the

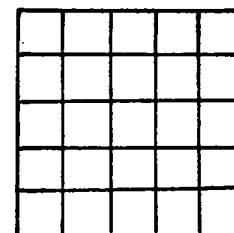
machine user holding, replacing or moving the position of each symbol individually in relation to the position of the prize award money sums shown.

This control is extended to include the prize award amounts.

The system relates the game activity more closely to the gaming table by offering in effect an 'odds' factor and the opportunity to exercise a degree of skill in making selections not available in present gaming machines.

FIGURE ONE

20p	90p	20p	20p	70p
£1				10p
30p	⊙	⊙	⊙	£1
40p				40p
10p	60p	20p	80p	50p



HOLD - REPLACE

MOVE
TO

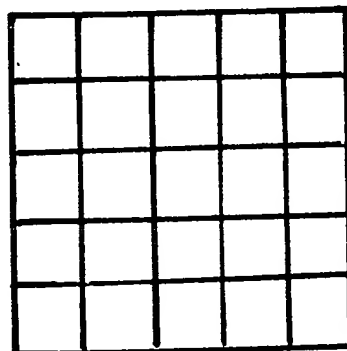
CANCEL

COINS

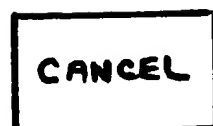
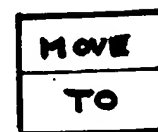
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FIGURE ONE

20 _p	90 _p	20 _p	20 _p	70 _p
£1				10 _p
30 _p	⊙	⊙	⊙	£1
40 _p				40 _p
10 _p	60 _p	20 _p	80 _p	50 _p



HOLD - REPLACE



SPECIFICATION

Improved gaming apparatus

This invention relates to a gaming machine.

5 The object of the invention is to provide a new or improved gaming machine. Variation of the basic function and operating principles of present day gaming machines provides a new dimension of gaming activity directly related to skill factors.

10 According to the invention there is provided a video screen and electronic means for replacing each symbol separately, "holding" each symbol separately and moving each symbol from one position to another.

15 The layout of the symbols is intended to simulate a five reel gaming machine. There are five vertical rows of symbols, the first vertical row of three symbols and the fifth row of three symbols are replaced with prize awards; that is various amounts of money are displayed making possible for the first time a variable prize award system for a "winning line" of identical symbols.

20 All present gaming machines are based on a pre-determined prize award system for winning combinations presented by a static display.

25 This variable odds system is created by the player as he selects the prize award structure most likely to maximise his financial gain, the objective of every player.

30 The stake inserted into the machine remaining constant there is a "true" gaming facility made available, odds relating to stake and the inherent skill factor provides a previously unattainable level of "gaming table" type of activity.

35 This "gaming table" type of activity is further emphasized by the facility to replace each symbol and prize award individually or to hold each symbol and prize award individually or to move each symbol position.

40 The facility to move each symbol from one position to another enhances even more so the skill factor of the system as the player can exchange positions of symbols and prize awards in relation to the "hold" and "replace" patterns appearing on the screen.

45 These combinations of activities, replacing, holding, exchanging symbols and prize awards provide the basis for numerous video type games. The symbols used for video gaming machines would be "fruits", "dice", cards and numbers, such being in common use today. The money amounts shown as prize awards would be dictated by legal requirements.

50 The game subsequently described is by way of example only.

Example

When the machine is not in use a mobile information display is presented on the screen.

60 The player inserts a coin or token into the slot provided to activate the play facilities.

The player operates the key marked "start". The symbols and prize awards change in rapid sequence (which could be horizontally or

vertically). The objective, a winning line, consists of three identical symbols "in line" horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

The value of the prize awarded is calculated by adding together the money values shown at each end of a winning line of identical symbols.

70 A further operation of the "play" key postulates the "hold" feature being made available. This is indicated to the player by a message on the video screen and by the hold keys "flashing".

75 The arrangement of the hold keys (figure 1) is such that each key relates to a specific symbol or prize award by its position.

80 The player studies the pattern of symbols and prize awards to decide which 'positions' to hold and then operates the specific keys to secure that a specific symbol or symbols are held in that position.

85 A further operation of the key postulates the "replace" feature being made available. This is indicated to the player by a message on the video screen followed by the word "replace" appearing in sequence beneath each symbol and prize award. Operation of the specific replace/hold key is decided by the player, operation of the "replace" key causes the symbol to change, if this key is not operated the symbol or prize award remains the same.

90 A further operation of the play key postulates the "move to" or "position exchange" feature being made available. This is indicated to the player by a message on the video screen and the specific "move to" key (figure 1.) flashing.

95 The player having studied the pattern of symbols and prize awards selects the symbols he wishes to move or exchange position. The movement of a symbol or prize award from one position on the screen to another is achieved by the player operating first the hold/replace key specific to the symbol's position he wishes to move, then the "move to" key itself and then the hold/replace key specific to the position of the symbol the player wishes to replace with the first symbol, in this way a selected symbol is moved to a selected position.

100 Figure 1 is a diagrammatic layout of a variable prize award/odds gaming machine. This drawing is by way of example only.

105 The equipment provided for the players use is an electronically operated micro-processor controlled gaming machine presenting on a video screen a number of symbols and prize awards arranged to represent the reels of a conventional mechanical reel gaming machine.

110 Figure 1 shows the video display screen, the "hold" and "replace" keyboard, the "move to" key used in conjunction with the hold and replace keyboard and the cancel key for use by players in the event of an error or change of mind.

Pay out controller system

125 Two separator methods of regulating the frequency of payouts would be provided, one included in the programme, the other would be manual and within the machine for use by the

operator. The objective is that something like a dial would be set to very frequent, frequent, less frequent.

- 5 Very frequent—for quiet times on site to encourage players and to make the machine appear "busy".

Frequent—average activity on machine.

Less frequent—busy periods when numbers of people wish to use the machine.

10 Pay out structure

The apparatus will be programmed to pay out the percentage of coins into the machine as dictated by legal requirements of any specific country. Variations of the payout structure can be achieved by simple programming to meet legal requirements or to accommodate changes in play features.

Coin acceptors

- 20 The number and type will be dictated by the cost per game, they could be 2p., 5p., 10p. or 20p. or 50p. coin acceptors for U.K. use.

Coin dispensers

- 25 The number and type will also be dictated by the cost per game but as an example the 10p. cost per game for "club" operation would have the 50p. dispenser with a capacity to hold £100 and the 10p. dispenser to hold £10. The unit to be fitted with a warning device when coin levels fall below the reserve necessary to payout the designated amounts in prizes.

Cash box

A double locking cash box is provided to collect the overflow from the dispensers.

Number of reels

- 35 The equipment shall display on the video screen five "reels" each reel showing three symbols in the vertical plane. The number of reels can be increased to accommodate any game.

Symbols

- 40 These would be fruits, or any other symbol, on reels 2, 3 and 4. Reel 1 and reel 5 would display different sums of money as the prize awards.

Features

- 45 The equipment will provide the facility to hold each fruit symbol individually, to replace each symbol by operation of a key, and to move each symbol from one position to another by operation of a "move to" key. This facility could be extended to the prize award reels if a game activity so required. A frequency controller for features could be provided similar to that provided for payout frequency.

Hold

- 55 This feature would "come up" at random and enables the machine user to retain those symbols favourably positioned to make a winning line.

Replace.

- 60 This feature would "come up" at random enabling the machine user to replace any or all symbols as the selection dictates towards a winning line.

Move to

- 65 This feature would "come up" at random and would enable the machine user to move a symbol from one position to another to make a winning line or create a more favourable position should one of the other features come up.

Prizes

- 70 The method of identifying a winning line is shown in figure 1 but it is basically three symbols the same vertically, horizontally or diagonally. The prize award being calculated by adding the amounts of money at each end of a winning line.

75 Credit display

The machines to include a credit display recording each coin insertion and each win.

Display

- 80 When the machine is not in use a series of words and illustrations would move slowly across the video display area. When the machine is in use comments or instructions would appear in a specific area of the display.

Cabinet

- 85 Two types would be provided, upright for use by a standing player and the "cocktail" table type for a seated player but both would be distinctive in style.

Programmes

- 90 The machine shall be programmed by small plug-in solid state memory modules.

Sound

- 95 Sound is becoming increasingly important to all amusement machines and as a distinctive machine sounds would be programmed to provide a pattern unique to this machine.

Security

- 100 A micro processor shall keep a record of the amount of money taken and paid out by the machine since the last reset, switches to be provided internally to display and reset these values. A coin reserve indicator should be fitted to maintain coin levels for payment of prizes, particularly the jackpot.

105 General comment

The game as outlined on the machine provides many alternative methods of winning and the activity has much in common with a game of cards or roulette.

- 110 There is considerable skill required in selecting to hold, replace or move symbols to maximise winnings. The calculation of the amount of the payout is simple and quick, there is no extensive

legend of prize awards to be studied during decision making.

- 5 The method of playing the game is simple and fast providing essential "pace". The machine could be considered to be the very essence of a gaming machine, being the first gaming machine with variables providing real gaming and gambling options.

Claims

- 10 1. An arrangement of symbols and prize awards, consisting of sums of money, which makes possible the playing of a new game, and a new gaming activity, in that the combination of symbols and prize awards makes it unnecessary
15 to use a pre-determined and static prize award scheme as in use all gaming apparatus of the present day.

- 20 2. A gaming apparatus which makes it possible to play the game according to claim one by electronic means.

- 25 3. A gaming apparatus that according to claim two provides control means that enable the gaming apparatus user to retain or hold an individual prize award, to replace or respin an individual symbol or prize award or to exchange or move the position of an individual symbol or prize award.

- 30 4. A frequency controlled system that according to any previous claim permits regulation of the frequency of payout, or the features provided, to maximise use of the gaming apparatus by the public.

- 35 5. A gaming apparatus as herein before described with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawing.